

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A biopsy probe for the collection of at least one soft tissue sample from a surgical patient, said biopsy probe comprising:
  - a. a frame having a distal end and a proximal end;
  - b. an elongated piercing element attached to the distal end of said frame, said piercing element having a sharpened distal end and a port proximal thereto for receiving a tissue mass;
  - c. an elongated cutter disposed within said piercing element, for harvesting a tissue mass received within said port of said piercing element; and
  - d. a device for automatically axially rotating said piercing element after severing sample, whereby multiple samples can be harvested about a longitudinal axis of said piercing element without manually rotating said piercing element.
2. The probe of claim 1, wherein said device for automatically axially rotating said piercing element is at least partially disposed on said cutter, such that when said device is engaged, rotation of said cutter affects rotation of said piercing element.
3. The probe of claim 2, further including a control unit for activating both the cutter, so that a tissue sample can be harvested, and said device so that said piercing element can be rotated.
4. The probe of claim 1, wherein said cutter comprises an elongated tube having a cutting blade at its distal end, wherein said tube is axially and rapidly rotated and advanced distally within said port to harvest a tissue mass.

5. The probe of claim 4, wherein said device for automatically axially rotating said piercing element comprises an first member disposed on said cutter, said first member cooperating with a second member which is connected to said piercing element, such that when said first and second members are engaged with each other, rotation of said cutter affects rotation of said piercing element.
6. The probe of claim 5 further including a control unit for activating both the cutter, so that a tissue sample can be harvested, and said device, so that said piercing element can be rotated.
7. A biopsy probe for the collection of at least one soft tissue sample from a surgical patient, said biopsy probe comprising:
- a. a frame having a distal end and a proximal end;
  - b. an elongated piercing element attached to the distal end of said frame, said piercing element having a sharpened distal end and a port proximal thereto for receiving a tissue mass;
  - c. an elongated cutter disposed within said piercing element, for harvesting a tissue mass received within said port of said piercing element; and
  - d. a means for automatically axially rotating said piercing element after severing a sample, whereby multiple samples can be harvested about a longitudinal axis of said piercing element without manually rotating said piercing element.
8. The probe of claim 7, wherein said means for automatically axially rotating said piercing element is at least partially disposed on said cutter, such that when said means is engaged, rotation of said cutter affects rotation of said piercing element.

9. The probe of claim 8, further including a control unit for activating both the cutter, so that a tissue sample can be harvested, and said means so that said piercing element can be rotated.
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10. The probe of claim 7, wherein said cutter comprises an elongated tube having a cutting blade at its distal end, wherein said tube is axially and rapidly rotated and advanced distally within said port to harvest a tissue mass.
- 10 11. The probe of claim 10, wherein said means for automatically axially rotating said piercing element comprises an first member disposed on said cutter, said first member cooperating with a second member which is connected to said piercing element, such that when said first and second members are engaged with each other, rotation of said cutter affects rotation of said piercing element.
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12. The probe of claim 11, further including a control unit for activating both the cutter, so that a tissue sample can be harvested, and said means, so that said piercing element can be rotated.
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13. A method for rotating a biopsy probe about a longitudinal axis thereof comprising the steps of:
- 25 a. providing a biopsy probe comprising an elongated piercing element having sharpened distal end and a port proximal thereto, and an elongated tubular cutter disposed coaxially and slidably within a lumen of said piercing element, said cutter having cutting blade attached a distal end thereof;
- 30 b. covering said port of said piercing element by advancing said cutter to a first distal position;
- c. inserting said probe within a patient;

- d. exposing said port of said piercing element by withdrawing said cutter to a first proximal position, and thereafter placing tissue within said port;
- e. placing a tissue sample within said cutter by rotating and advancing said cutter to said distal proximal position;
- f. rotating said piercing element a predetermined number of degrees by advancing said cutter to a second distal position, distal to said first distal position, and thereafter rotating said cutter said predetermined number of degrees to affect rotation of said piercing element; and
- g. withdrawing said cutter to a second proximal position which is proximal to said first proximal position and retrieving the tissue sample.